

Big Spy Country: Film and the U.S.-Canada Borderlands during the Second World War

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I see a long straight line athwart a continent: no chain of forts, or deep flowing river or mountain range, but a line drawn by men upon a map nearly a century ago, accepted with a handshake and kept ever since. A boundary which divides nations yet marks their friendly meeting ground: The 49th parallel, the only undefended frontier in the world.¹

So begins the 1941 feature film *49th Parallel*, actualised by the renowned director-writer team of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, and produced by the British Ministry of Information, which was responsible for the preparation and dissemination of materials to uphold civilian morale. The filmmakers designed this cross-border thriller as a way to inform the U.S. public of the dangers that a seemingly distant Nazi regime posed to their way of life. At a time when the United States officially remained neutral regarding the overseas hostilities, the film served as an effective piece of propaganda. Meanwhile, between 1939 and 1943, Hollywood had also been producing alarmist films set in the U.S.-Canada borderlands that dealt with the looming Nazi menace in North

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America. Although small in number, these motion pictures represent a compelling wartime film cycle.

In the study of cinema, the term cycle, as Stephen Neale succinctly defines it, refers to a “groups of films made within a specific and limited time-span, and founded, for the most part, on the characteristics of individual commercial successes.”² The rise and subsequent fall of a particular film cycle depends upon its ability to exploit the audience’s perceived desires by drawing from current events, trends, and the financial and/or critical viability of similar film productions. As such, the study of a particular film cycle can help shed light on popular tastes, social anxieties, and contemporary politics within a compact timeframe.³ This essay demonstrates how Hollywood’s cycle of wartime espionage thrillers disseminated representations of the U.S.-Canada borderlands as alternatively a zone of vulnerability and as an indicator of a strengthened bilateral relationship.

Between the beginning of the Second World War and the attack on Pearl Harbor, spy films tended to exhibit pro-interventionist, anti-fascist, or war-preparedness themes by highlighting the likelihood of Axis penetration in the United States via Canada. The long, permeable, and mainly undefended border represented an Achilles Heel, an assailable locale where the United States felt most exposed and thus most insecure. The filmic U.S.-Canada borderlands appeared as a place where enemy agents could smuggle war-related resources, conduct acts of sabotage, or relay vital defence secrets back to Hitler. While Axis agents did maintain a presence throughout North America, films exaggerated their activities to encourage U.S. public opinion into moving away from isolationism. The spy thrillers and media accounts of Nazis entering the United States via

the border helped foster a “Trojan Horse” panic, which led to the increased security along the shared perimeter, as well as a stronger U.S.-Canadian defensive and economic alliance.

With the U.S. transition from neutrality to mobilisation after December 1941, the popular image of the U.S.-Canada border shifted accordingly. As Axis troops continually disregarded the integrity of European and Asian borders, the non-militarised borderline exemplified the smoothly functioning democratic systems of North America. The northwest borderlands became a symbolic cinematic landscape that indicated the fortitude of bilateral relationships. War-themed motion pictures depicted Canada as a vital ally of the United States, reinforcing the discourse of enhanced friendship. Hollywood’s macho leading actors depicted Canadians as courageous, democratic, and striving for equality in the fight against fascism. Although Hollywood still produced Nazi spy films set on or about the U.S.-Canada border, covert operatives appeared less threatening to U.S. national security. Motion pictures no longer intimated that the border zone could undermine hemispheric defences.

As Amanda Ann Klein argues, film cycles develop due to the appearance of a financially or critically auspicious “originary film”. This film influences other studios to produce motion pictures that “replicate the successful elements of that film, thus forming a cycle.”⁴ The “originary film” for the wartime cycle of spy pictures under discussion here was Warner Bros.’s *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), the first Hollywood production to deal forthrightly with the ominous Nazi presence in North America.⁵ Screenwriters Milton Krim and John Wexley loosely based the script upon a series of articles appearing in *The New York Post* during the winter of 1938-1939 documenting the

activities of a Nazi spy ring headquartered in New York City. Leon Turrour, a U.S. government agent, captured eighteen Nazi spies. A federal grand jury convicted four of them on charges of conspiring to steal U.S. military secrets. The highly publicised espionage case penetrated the national psyche, and consistently garnered front-page headlines. Subsequently, Turrour left the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and signed lucrative contracts with the *New York Post* and Random House. He also brokered a film deal with Warner Bros., which had bought the rights to his story, and served as a technical adviser for *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*.⁶

Both the film and Turrour's bestselling book, *Nazi Spies in America* (1939), purported that this spy ring was only a fraction of a larger scale Nazi conspiracy within the United States and Canada. The mass media emphasised the nefarious activities of other cross-border spies, which heightened anxieties concerning the ambitious designs of the Third Reich. The likelihood of fascism in the United States had become a matter of considerable public discussion in *Harper's*, *The New Republic*, and *The Nation*.⁷ These cautionary tales described the potential for domestic fascists and Gestapo agents to undermine the nation's democratic system from within North America. The tactics of Fifth Columnists included the dissemination of propaganda to outright espionage and subversion. Cells of Axis agents reputedly lurked along the perimeters of the United States, poised to embark upon the Nazification of the Western hemisphere. The largely unguarded 49th parallel potentially provided enemy agents refuge from detection while the borders themselves presented convenient portals of escape.

In *Nazi Spies in America*, Turrour exposed the existence of a vast network of hostile agents who had infiltrated North America. The book detailed how these operatives

used the U.S.-Canada border to gain access to the United States. According to Turrou, in 1935 the German spy headquarters sent Dr. Ignatz Griebel and Wilhelm Lonkowski to the border to survey possible points of entry for large groups of Nazis from Canada into the U.S. Midwest. Moreover, in the mid-1930s, Montreal became the hub of a considerable Nazi spy network for both Canada and New England.⁸ Between 1936 and 1939, the German consular network expanded to Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver. These consular offices functioned primarily as sources of information and intelligence gathering, which allegedly enabled the spies to “spread Nazi propaganda along the Canadian-United States border.”⁹

Warner Bros.’s legal files for *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* similarly documented Nazi activities in Canada. According to their research, Nazis in the Dominion had been extremely active and operated in close cooperation with their associates in the United States along the border.¹⁰ The film dramatised the exploits of this trans-border Nazi spy network through such organisations as the German-American and German-Canadian Bunds.¹¹ Still, undertaking this subject for the silver screen was a risky move for Warner Bros. Explicit war-related themes in motion pictures were taboo under the industry’s Production Code - a set of moral standards governing film content based on what constituted appropriate entertainment for an undifferentiated mass audience. Since 1934, the Production Code Administration (PCA), the film industry’s self-regulatory agency headed by Joseph Breen, enforced the Code to ensure that motion pictures were pure entertainment and not vehicles of propaganda. Specifically, section ten of the Code, known as the “Fair Treatment” or “National Feelings” clause, required films to portray all foreign nations and their citizens impartially.¹²

Required to remain politically neutral, Hollywood studios were disinclined to make films that concerned the rise of fascism and its potential threat to the United States, fearing that the PCA would withhold its seal of approval and thus prevent the film's exhibition. Despite the potential risks associated with such a sensitive subject matter, the Warners were ideologically committed to making *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*.¹³ Considering that many forces within the United States remained steadfastly anti-interventionist, the studio recognised that its proposed film project would provoke controversy. When Associate Producer Robert Lord first submitted the script to Joseph Breen, he urged that the "script must be kept under lock and key when you are not actually reading it, because the German-American Bund, the German Consul and all such forces are desperately trying to get a copy of it."¹⁴ After reading an early draft of the script, Breen articulated his concerns to Jack L. Warner: "we raise, for your serious consideration, the question as to whether or not your studio, and the industry as a whole, should sponsor a motion picture, dealing with so highly controversial a subject." Nevertheless, Breen conceded that the material was "technically within the provisions of the Production Code." Despite its potentially incendiary nature, the PCA approved the script because the story stemmed from current events - that is, the recent and sensational spy trials in New York City, which had already been widely publicised in the media.¹⁵

The spy case, along with Turrou's book and the filmic dramatisation of these events, fuelled the notion that the U.S.-Canada borderlands posed a vital security risk to the United States, necessitating the fortification of border. Beginning on July 1st, 1939, the U.S. Government required every Canadian citizen to present a passport before being allowed to enter the country, arguing that this requirement was part of a general system

for registration and control of aliens. The Dominion government resented this regulation, as it adversely affected the tourism industry. Canada did not impose parallel restrictions, and continued to permit the free entry of U.S. citizens into Canada without any identification.¹⁶ In addition to the passport regulation, seven thousand men of the New York National Guard mobilised in Buffalo “to prevent treasonous activities along the Niagara border.”¹⁷ The American Legion, a non-governmental veteran’s organisation, also mobilised to keep Nazi Fifth Columnists from crossing the border at Niagara Falls.¹⁸

Subsequently, isolationists in Congress accused *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* of being a propagandist attempt to fuel war hysteria. This sentiment culminated in the 1941 hearings of the Nye-Clark Committee Investigating Propaganda in Motion Pictures. In his testimony, Harry Warner, President of Warner Bros., Pictures, Inc., defended the charges against his studio arguing that the film was a factual portrayal of a Nazi spy ring.¹⁹ In spite of, or most likely because of, its controversial nature, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* garnered critical and popular enthusiasm of both a congratulatory and hostile nature. For example, the reviewers of the *New York Times* and *Variety* contended that *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was dangerously inflammatory, while *The Toronto Daily Star* claimed it was “instructive and entertaining.”²⁰ Meanwhile, Warner Bros. received dozens of letters from filmgoers for expressing appreciation for the film’s bold denunciation of Nazism, as well as its vital contribution to democracy and Americanism.²¹

The hype surrounding the film paved the way for other openly anti-Nazi spy films produced by the major studios. Public opinion was gradually moving towards preparedness, and sensationalist accounts of Nazis in North America were at once popular and profitable. Between the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* in the spring of

1939 and the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Hollywood released approximately two dozen features openly dealing with the topic of Axis espionage.²² Within this distinctive film cycle, filmmakers used the permeable U.S.-Canada borderlands as a setting to illustrate the imperilled nature of U.S. national security by graphically representing the encroaching menace of external forces upon U.S. soil.

One notable example was *Man at Large*, released in September of 1941, in which a Nazi airman escapes from a Canadian military prison and heads south across the border. Dallas Gilmartin, an aspiring journalist, persuades her managing editor to send her to the U.S.-Canada border so that she can track down the Nazi fugitive. She meets Bob, an undercover G-Man who is assisting a British Intelligence Officer to capture a group of Axis spies known as the “21 Whistlers,” which has been organising German attacks on British supply ships. The British agent has been impersonating the fugitive Nazi prisoner all along in order to infiltrate and ultimately break up the spy ring.²³

Similar to *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, the subject matter for *Man at Large* derived from current events. One reviewer wrote that “with papers fairly popping with news of one of the greatest spy hunts in the nation’s history, and accounts from the trials exceeding in actuality the most fantastic devices employed by spies in any melodrama, it is hard to find a film more timely.”²⁴ Specifically, the real-life exploits of Baron Franz von Werra, a German pilot shot down over England in September 1940, inspired producer Ralph Dietrich to make the film. In January 1941, Britain shipped Von Werra along with six other captured German soldiers to a prison of war camp in Old Fort Henry, near Kingston, Ontario. While en route, Von Werra escaped from the transport train and paddled a stolen rowboat across the St. Lawrence River to reach Ogdensburg, New York

on January 24, 1941, where he turned himself over to the police.²⁵ Protected by international law, the Nazi aviator was freed on bail - paid for by the German consulate - and eventually fled the country. Harry Brand, publicity director at Twentieth Century Fox, claimed that another inspiration for the film came from a case in which the FBI arrested a group of twenty-nine Axis agents, including a writer, a watchmaker, and the operator of an auto court, characters that the film replicated.²⁶

Similar to *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *Man at Large* enhanced the impression that the German secret service had a skilful, efficient, and organised network of spies and saboteurs along the U.S.-Canada border. In reality, Nazi spy rings were unsuccessful at obtaining any vital national security secrets. Espionage activities throughout North America were badly managed endeavours that were low on Hitler's priority list. Unlike their on-screen counterparts, German spies were not professionally trained 'super agents;' any data they collected was easily obtained public knowledge.²⁷ Regardless, the perception remained that Axis agents could easily cross the U.S.-Canada border to obtain information or use Canada an observation post from which to chart U.S. developments.

Not surprisingly, in its concerted effort to convince the United States to fully join the Allied war effort, the British Government also cautioned that a global network of Axis spies had successfully infiltrated the Western hemisphere. To that end, the British Ministry of Information sponsored the production of nonfiction and feature films to help influence the United States into abandoning its commitment to non-interventionism.²⁸ In December 1939, Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of the Films Division, asked renowned British director Michael Powell if he and his creative partner Emeric Pressburger would

make a feature film for the ministry. Powell agreed on the condition that the film was to be set in Canada. According to Powell,

Canada is in the war already as a member of the British Commonwealth and is no more ready than we are to deal with Hitler. Sooner or later, their coast will be attacked and their ships sunk, and that will bring America into the war. I want to make a film in Canada to scare the pants off the Americans, and bring them into the war sooner.²⁹

With the fall of France in June 1940, Canada had become Britain's chief ally, providing raw materials, military supplies, troops, and large sums of money in addition to defending the North Atlantic from predatory German U-boats. Yet John MacCormac, Canadian correspondent for the *New York Times*, speculated that while Canada was ably defending itself overseas, the country was "helpless in the face of aggression on land." Since the United States and Canada shared a border, the impact of such a scenario would be devastating:

If Canadian cities were bombed, a substantial part of the wealth destroyed would be lost by American investors. If Canadian cities were annexed there would be an uproar from American farmers...and, since more than one thousand American firms already have branch plants in Canada, there would be no particular rejoicing among American manufacturers.³⁰

Powell also believed that if the United States were to remain neutral and unprepared, it would not be long before Canada's defences would be endangered, resulting in Germany's command of the North Atlantic. Powell concluded that the U.S.-Canada borderlands provided the most effective cinematic backdrop to cure American audiences of their insularity. Therefore, he intended the film to show the importance of having the U.S.-Canada border "patrolled and surveyed."³¹ As the title of the film demonstrates, the heart of *49th Parallel* thus resides in the borderlands straddling the United States and Canada.

The film opens with a map of North America. The camera spotlights the peaceful landscape of the shared U.S.-Canada border, skirting its tremendous length from the Rockies, through the Prairies, and across the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean. The Canadian Coastal Defense spots and destroys a German submarine lurking in the North Atlantic. A landing party comprising of six of the Nazi crew had previously disembarked onto the shore, however, seeking supplies at the trading post. Now stranded, the fugitives march across Canada desperately trying to cross the border into the then-neutral United States, leaving a trail of murder and brutality in their wake. Nevertheless, heroic Canadians kill or capture each of the outlaws. In a message clearly meant for U.S. audiences, each episodic confrontation focused on the initial neutrality of a character whose opinions drastically change upon meeting the Nazis in the flesh.

The film ends at the U.S. Canada border in Niagara Falls with an ideological showdown between the Nazi captain and a Canadian soldier. Canadian border authorities arrest the German, thereby containing the Nazi menace in North America. Still, the conclusion of the film intentionally left audiences with a sense of unease. Perhaps there

were other Nazis ready to slip unnoticed across the U.S.-Canada border and into the United States? Whether or not the film was successful in disrobing Americans of their isolationist vestments is a moot point. Although Columbia Pictures quickly bought the feature for U.S. distribution, the picture premiered in March of 1942 as *The Invaders* three months after the official U.S. entry into the Second World War on December 1941. The British production inspired *Valley of Hunted Men* (1942), featuring the Three Mesquiteers. In this instalment of Republic's popular B-Western series, the daring cowboys thwart three Nazis who had escaped from a Canadian prisoner of war camp and fled across the border into Wyoming.³² Aided by German Americans in the region, the Nazi fugitives terrorise the borderlands communities. A posse of prairie townsfolk pursues the Nazis, killing two of the fugitives, but the surviving Nazi murders the nephew of a refugee German scientist, and assumes his identity. With the help of local secret Nazi sympathisers, the fugitive attempts to steal a secret chemical formula for the German army. The Three Mesquiteers successfully capture him before he accomplishes this act of sabotage.

Indeed, by the winter of 1941-1942, after spending two years or so skirting the issue of war, Hollywood rapidly converted to producing explicitly war-related films. The PCA now encouraged studios to make propagandistic motion pictures to aid the war effort. Moreover, the FDR administration considered the cinema a key morale-building tool and film as one of the most effective media for mobilising public opinion. In an unprecedented effort to mould the content of domestic films, the U.S. government advised Hollywood on how to mobilise for war through such agencies as the Motion Picture Bureau (MPB), a branch of the Office of War Information (OWI).³³

An integral component of the war effort and of assuring hemispheric defence was the bolstering of relationships with countries north and south of the U.S. borders. Since the mid-1930s the FDR administration had set aside traditional policies of interventionism and designed the Good Neighbor Policy to fortify the bonds between the United States and Latin American republics, particularly Mexico. Likewise, FDR regarded healthy cultural, political, and socio-economic relations with Canada as vital to U.S. national security. The very public and politically expedient friendship between FDR and Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King personified the closer ties between Canada and the United States. In the summer of 1940, FDR and King agreed to a formal Canadian-American military alliance.³⁴

Voluntarily complying with the foreign policy aims of the FDR administration, the film industry produced films portraying Canada's vital role in the war effort by featuring dauntless Canadian characters. For example, *Captains of the Clouds* (1942) starred 'tough guy' James Cagney as a red-blooded Canadian bush pilot who enlists in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) after hearing a radio broadcast of Winston Churchill's "We Shall Never Surrender" speech. Filmed mostly on location in Canada and produced with the cooperation of the RCAF, the timely drama included footage taken at various pilot training schools. With its thrilling aerial sequences and patriotic themes, the film was "a bell-ringer for American audiences" as well as a "patriotism-arouser for audiences in all parts of the British Empire."³⁵ The film critic for the *Toronto Daily Star* raved about *Captains of the Clouds* stating, "at long last...and not before it was needed...a picture which presents Canada in its true light has come to the movie screen [...] From a purely Canadian standpoint, it is as fine a piece of celluloid as one has ever

produced.”³⁶ Fooled so often by “pseudo-Canadian” Hollywood fare, the film is “the first picture to show what Canada is doing in this war.” Instead of presenting the country as “a collection of dreamy-eyed philosophers and pacifistic ostriches; it is a film of action about a country at war, and it does not need to drag in Nazi atrocities to drive its point home.”³⁷

The following year, Universal released *Corvette K-225*, a celebration of Canada’s small escort war ships that protected the large, slow-moving transport of war materials across the North Atlantic.³⁸ Randolph Scott, best known for his leading roles in Hollywood Westerns, starred as the commanding officer of the fictitious Corvette K-225. The film, dedicated to “the officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, who have made the name Corvette a byword for endurance and sacrifice among the submarine lanes of the North Atlantic,” focuses on the ship’s courageous Canadian crew, who eventually forestall a U-boat attack. The Royal Canadian Navy cooperated on the production, and director Richard Rosson accompanied an actual Canadian convoy across the Atlantic for the action sequences.³⁹

Hollywood continued to produce spy films that centred on Nazi sabotage and intrigue in the U.S.-Canada borderlands. Yet the film cycle now tended to reinforce the discourse of bilateral collaboration by portraying Canadians and Americans working together to vanquish the Nazi threat. *Unseen Enemy* (1942), which takes place on the eve of the U.S. entry into the Second World War, illustrates this ‘hands-across-the border’ narrative. Two high-ranking Nazi naval officers escape from a prisoner of war camp on the U.S.-Canada border. After one of the men is shot, the other escapee goes to San Francisco where a café serves as a rendezvous point for the area’s German spy ring. The

Axis agents strive to round up a captain and crew to operate a Japanese ship in San Francisco harbour for a daring escape and raid of U.S. shipping interests along the coast. Their plans are thwarted, however, by a Government agent and a Canadian Intelligence Officer, working together to bring the Nazi agents to justice. The filmmakers intended the production as a warning to audiences to beware of the “unseen enemy,” that is, German, Italian, and Japanese spies who may be living “right next door.”⁴⁰

Northern Pursuit (1942), a film that combined “elements of Nazi spies with the lusty and vigorous adventures of a Canadian Northwest Mountie,” similarly portrayed the dangers that saboteurs and their collaborationists posed to the war effort.⁴¹ The film concentrated on the efforts of several Nazi aviators dropped off by a German submarine near Hudson Bay to “wreak havoc among us simple Canadians, and pave the way for the mighty German invasion -- or at least hamper our part of the war.”⁴² Errol Flynn plays Steve Wagner, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer of German descent who pretends to defect from the force in order to insinuate himself with the Nazi saboteur ring. He agrees to guide the Nazis and local sympathisers to their predetermined meeting location, an abandoned mineshaft. Once there, the team re-assembles a bomber that they plan to use to bomb the Panama Canal. However, the undercover Mountie shoots the entire crew and parachutes out of the plane before it crashes. *The Yukon Patrol* (1942), consisting of re-edited footage from Republic’s twelve-episode serial *King of the Royal Mounted* (1940), also unfolds in the Canadian northland. This time a Mountie prevents enemy agents from obtaining “Compound X,” a mineral substance used to cure infantile paralysis. The mineral also contains powerful magnetic properties that the Nazis plan to use to sink the British fleet. Meanwhile, Alaska is the setting for *Riders of the Northland*

(1942), in which two Texas Rangers stop a U-boat captain and his associates from constructing a runway for their planes.⁴³

As *Riders of the Northland*, *The Yukon Patrol*, and *Northern Pursuit* suggest, the expansive Canadian north became critical to the war effort due to advances in aviation, naval, and submarine technologies. As a result, both Canada and the United States expanded their military presence in the region.⁴⁴ In particular, the Alaska-Yukon borderlands became a strategic zone for hemispheric defence. The United States believed that Japanese forces in the Aleutian Islands could gain a foothold in Alaska, which would put the Japanese in a position to mount further attacks on the mainland. In order to secure the safety of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, the U.S. army built the Alaska Highway through Canada in 1942 and 1943.⁴⁵

According to the bilateral rhetoric, Americans and Canadians toiled side-by-side to protect North America against enemy invasion. Construction crews endured subzero temperatures and dangerous conditions associated with building a road in the rugged wilderness. This classic confrontation of man and machine against both nature and the evil Axis empires provided rich fodder for screenwriters looking for timely material for film productions. In 1943, Hollywood released two adventure dramas that centred on the construction of the transnational highway and the critical importance of the Alaska-Yukon border region.

In *Alaska Highway*, two brothers in the U.S. Army Engineer Corps vie for the affections of the same woman. The production included actual footage of the construction and was dedicated to “the officers and men, who slashed the Alcan Highway through in time to protect our Alaskan outposts.”⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the plot of *Law of the Northwest*

revolves around tungsten miners in the fictitious town of Moose Horn, Canada, who decide to build a road spur connecting to the Alaskan Highway, allowing the quick transportation of this valuable war material. After an engineer is murdered, a Mountie investigates and arrests the saboteur, which enables the completion of the road.⁴⁷

After 1943, the production of spy films or similar pictures dealing with the Nazi threat to North America declined.⁴⁸ Between 1939 and 1943, however, tales of espionage, foreign intrigue, and sabotage in feature films set in the U.S.-Canada borderlands revealed a link between circumstances abroad and threats at home. In light of both real and imagined Axis penetration along the border, a greater degree of consensus within the Western Hemisphere arose to counteract the Nazi menace. Through the lens of these topical motion pictures, one can track the changing foreign policy agenda of the United States, as it transitioned from neutrality to hemisphere defence and to mobilisation. Throughout this progression, the representations of the U.S.-Canada borderlands changed in meaning as well. Beginning with the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, films positioned the border as a source of anxiety for the United States due to the presence of Nazi Fifth Columnists.

Following the official U.S. entry into the war in December 1941, the United States required the cooperation of Canada to mobilise a successful war effort. Motion pictures featured staunch Canadian characters trouncing Nazi foes either singlehandedly or through a collaborative effort with their American neighbours. Therefore, in their portrayals of the U.S.-Canada borderlands during the war years, motion pictures vacillated between envisioning the border as either a perilous perimeter or an area of peaceful exchange. These competing utopic and dystopic visions in turn reinforced the

ambivalent nature of North American relations during a time when the United States struggled to come to terms with its role as a world power.

Endnotes

- ¹ 49th Parallel (dir. Michael Powell, British Ministry of Information, 1941).
- ² Stephen Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 9.
- ³ Amanda Ann Klein, *American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 9.
- ⁴ Klein, *American Film Cycles*, 4.
- ⁵ *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (dir. Anatole Litvak, Warner Bros., 1939).
- ⁶ The contract gave Warner Bros. the right to make one or more pictures using Turrou's material, as well as to use his name and physical likeness on the screen and in connection with advertising and publicity. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Warner Bros. Archives, University of Southern California Cinema-Television Library, Los Angeles, CA (hereafter WB/USC).
- ⁷ See for example, Lillian Symes, "Fascism for America," *Harper's*, 179 (June 1939): 35-43; "American fascists," *The New Republic*, 98 (8 March 1939): 117-8; "Nazis are Here," *The Nation*, 148 (4 March 1939): 253.
- ⁸ Leon G. Turrou, *Nazi Spies in America* (New York: Random House, 1939), 14. See also, William Breuer, *Hitler's Undercover War: The Nazi Espionage Invasion of the U.S.A.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 18.
- ⁹ Turrou, *Nazi Spies in America*, 138. See also, Graeme S. Mount, *Canada's Enemies: Spies and Spying in the Peaceable Kingdom* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), 53.
- ¹⁰ "New Research Service, Inc. Newsletter No. 43, 2 September 1939," Legal Files, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, WB/USC. Copies of the weekly newsletter and source material were used to aid the Law Office of Freston & Files mount a defense in the case of Kuhn vs. Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc. Shortly after the film's premiere, Fritz Kuhn, leader of the German-American Bund had unsuccessfully filed a five million dollar libel suit against the studio, requesting an injunction to prevent its release.
- ¹¹ *Hollywood Reporter*, 13 May 1939, 1.
- ¹² Specifically, the clause reads: "The history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly." "The Motion Picture Production Code (as Published 31, March 1930)," reprinted in Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 596.
- ¹³ See Michael E. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers: The Warner Bros. Campaign Against Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).
- ¹⁴ "Letter from Robert Lord to Joseph Breen," 24 December 1938, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA (hereafter MHL, AMPAS). The working title for the film was *Storm over America*. Charles Einfeld, the studio's director of advertising and publicity, also determined that the secrecy surrounding the production would also build up a potentially advantageous air of mystery. "Inter-Office Memo from Walter MacEwen to Hal Wallis," 5 January 1939, WB/USC.
- ¹⁵ Emphasis in original document. "Letter to Jack L. Warner from Joseph Breen," 30 December 1938, MHL, AMPAS.
- ¹⁶ *New York Times*, 10 November 1940, 1.
- ¹⁷ *New York Journal and American*, 5 June 1940. Cited in Louis De Jong, *The German Fifth Column in the Second World War*, trans. C.M. Geyl (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 107.
- ¹⁸ Harold Lavine, *Fifth Column in America* (New York: Doubleday, 1940), 5.
- ¹⁹ Other films cited as examples of "propaganda" included *The Great Dictator* (dir. Charlie Chaplin, United Artists, 1940), *Sergeant York* (dir. Howard Hawks, Warner Bros., 1940), and *The Man I Married* (dir. Irving Pichel Twentieth Century-Fox, 1940). U.S. Congress. Sen. Propaganda in Motion Pictures Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce. 77th Cong. 1st Sess. September 23, 1941. See John E. Moser, "'Gigantic Engines of Propaganda': The 1941 Senate Investigation of Hollywood," *Historian* 63, no. 4 (June 2001): 731-52. The Nye-Clark Committee had also subpoenaed Anatole Litvak, the director of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. *New York Times*, 14 September 1941, 41. On anti-Semitism and hearings see, Stephen Alan Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History Up to World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 251-267.
- ²⁰ *New York Times*, 29 April 1939; *Variety*, 2 May 1939; and *Toronto Daily Star*, 13 May 1939, 8.
- ²¹ *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Publicity and Reception Files, WB/USC.
- ²² J.R. Parrish and M.R. Pitts, *The Great Spy Pictures*, vol. 1 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974), 10.
- ²³ "Synopsis of *Man at Large*," Clippings file, MHL, AMPAS. *Man at Large* (dir. Eugene Forde, Twentieth Century-Fox, 1941).
- ²⁴ *Motion Picture Daily*, 10 September 1941, Clippings file, MHL, AMPAS.
- ²⁵ *Toronto Daily Star*, 27 January 1941, 5.
- ²⁶ "Vital Statistics on *Man at Large*," Clippings file, MHL, AMPAS.
- ²⁷ See Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- ²⁸ "British Cinema during the Second World War," in *Britain Can Take It: British Cinema in the Second World War*, edited by Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 4-6. See also Nicholas Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign against American 'Neutrality' in World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- ²⁹ Michael Powell, *A Life in Movies: an Autobiography* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 347.
- ³⁰ John MacCormac, "What will America do about Canada?" *Current History*, 52 (June 1940): 35-36, 60.
- ³¹ Powell, *A Life in Movies*, 350.
- ³² *Valley of Hunted Men* (dir. John English, Republic, 1942). *Daily Variety*, 23 October 1942, 3. In this installment of the serial, the Three Mesquiteers were Bob Steele as Tucson Smith, Tom Tyler as Stony Brooke, and Jimmie Dodd as Lullaby Joslin. See also, R. Philip Loy, "B-Westerns Go to War," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 197-205.
- ³³ See Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- ³⁴ On the Ogdensburg Agreement and the establishment of the Permanent Joint Board of Defense, as well as U.S.-Canadian relations during this period, see Galen Roger Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998).
- ³⁵ *Captains of the Clouds* (dir. Michael Curtiz, Warner Bros., 1942). *Variety*, 21 January 1942, 8.
- ³⁶ *Toronto Daily Star*, February 12, 1942, 12.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Corvette K-225* (dir. Richard Rosson, Universal, 1943).

³⁹ Lt. John Rhodes Sturdy, the commanding officer of one of the Canadian corvettes, wrote an early version of the script and served as a technical advisor. *Motion Picture Herald Product Digest*, 2 October 1943, 1565. See also *Hollywood Reporter*, 19 October 1943, 17.

⁴⁰ *Unseen Enemy* (dir. John Rawlins, Universal, 1942). *American Film Institute (AFI) Catalog*, <http://afi.chadwyck.com> (accessed 3 January 2012).

⁴¹ *Variety*, 20 October 1943, 12. *Northern Pursuit* (dir. Raoul Walsh, Warner Bros., 1943).

⁴² *Toronto Daily Star*, 11 February 1944, 11.

⁴³ *The Yukon Patrol* (dir. William Witney and John English, Republic, 1942). *Riders of the Northland* (dir. William Berke, Columbia, 1942), *AFI Catalog*, <http://afi.chadwyck.com> (accessed 24 April 2012).

⁴⁴ See Shelagh D. Grant, *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010), 247-283.

⁴⁵ Heath Twichell, *Northwest Epic: The Building of the Alaska Highway* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 52.

⁴⁶ *Alaska Highway* (dir. Frank McDonald, Paramount, 1943). *AFI Catalog* <http://afi.chadwyck.com> (accessed 18 May 2012).

⁴⁷ *Law of the Northwest* (dir. William Berke, Columbia, 1943). *AFI Catalog*, <http://afi.chadwyck.com> (accessed 24 April 2012). See also Frank Norris, "Hollywood, Alaska, and Politics: The Impact of World War II on Films About the North Country," in *Alaska at War, 1941-1945: The Forgotten War Remembered*, edited by Fern Chandonnet (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2008), 227-234.

⁴⁸ In 1942, sixty-four films depicted "the enemy," all but two of which dealt with espionage and sabotage. Hollywood only produced sixteen films concerning enemy agents in 1944. Dorothy B. Jones, "The Hollywood War Film: 1942-1944," *Hollywood Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1945), 56.